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Agenda item 3 (a) (i)
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: priority theme: women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development

Ministerial round table: enhancing national institutional arrangements for gender equality and women's empowerment

Chair's summary

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 14 March 2016, the Commission on the Status of Women held a ministerial round table on the topic "Enhancing national institutional arrangements for gender equality and women's empowerment", under the priority theme "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development". The participants in the round table exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the topic, with an emphasis on the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. The State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Yoji Muto, chaired the round table, and the Special Envoy on Gender of the African Development Bank, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, served as moderator. The meeting opened with brief introductions by the Chair and the moderator. Ministers and high-level officials from 28 Member States participated in the round table.

National institutional arrangements for gender equality and the empowerment of women

3. Participants provided examples from their countries of national institutional arrangements across branches and sectors of government for decision-making, policy action and budgeting on gender equality and women's empowerment. They described a wide range of frameworks and mechanisms and highlighted the diversity

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of arrangements available for this purpose. Constitutional guarantees of gender equality or non-discrimination were referenced frequently, as were national gender equality mechanisms, including ministries responsible for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Many participants described legislation, action plans, policies and programmes on a wide range of issues relating to gender equality, including initiatives promoting economic opportunities for women and addressing women's unpaid labour, the prevention of violence against women, the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and the protection of the rights of vulnerable women. A number of participants described temporary special measures to increase women's representation in decision-making positions, including through mandatory quotas for women in parliament and local governance structures and on corporate boards. It was noted, however, that while increasing the number of women in decision-making roles was important, it was imperative that both women and men who were committed advocates for gender equality and women's empowerment be in leadership positions.

4. Institutional arrangements, such as parliamentary and ministerial committees on gender equality, were described as being useful tools for bringing together decision makers across different sectors of government and political parties. Several participants underscored the importance of partnerships between government and non-governmental actors, including through advisory groups comprising experts drawn from civil society, international organizations and the private sector, which can provide Governments with access to a broad range of technical expertise.

Expanding the capacity, decision-making power and visibility of national gender equality mechanisms

5. While participants shared a commitment to ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment were priorities for all branches and sectors of government, several participants stressed the importance of having a single entity responsible for the coordination of efforts and for monitoring progress at the national level. In this regard, national gender equality mechanisms provided a unifying framework for accelerating progress towards gender equality and helped to prevent the fragmentation of efforts.

6. Participants discussed the importance of expanding the capacity, decision-making power and visibility of gender equality mechanisms, with a particular focus on the financing of such mechanisms, as well as data collection, monitoring and assessment. They emphasized the importance of adequate funding for their work within ministries and other gender equality mechanisms, and for gender equality generally. There was agreement that Governments needed to allocate more resources for achieving gender equality in accordance with the priority accorded to it at the highest levels of political leadership and in line with existing commitments, in order to achieve results. Participants described a range of efforts with regard to financing, including gender-responsive budgeting and allocating funds for projects aimed at women's empowerment.

7. Ministers discussed the significance of reliable and comprehensive data disaggregated by sex and other factors and of gender statistics for their work. The relationship between data and gender-responsive budgeting was noted; a lack of gender-specific information on revenue and expenditure in the development of budgets may have negative impacts on gender equality that go unnoticed. Several

participants emphasized the importance of accountability in achieving tangible progress, and of data disaggregated by sex in measuring such progress. The role of non-governmental organizations in monitoring progress and assessing results was emphasized.

Gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

8. Many participants noted the particular significance of their work in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ministers were in agreement that their efforts should go beyond achieving the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They emphasized that all of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their targets should contribute to the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment. To that end, participants stressed the importance of multisectoral partnerships for gender equality and the full involvement of gender equality mechanisms in all aspects of policymaking and programming for gender-responsive sustainable development. The role of the international human rights frameworks in those efforts, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, was stressed.

9. Participants emphasized the important role of Heads of Government and political leaders as advocates for the centrality of gender equality in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They stressed that this commitment must extend from the highest levels of government to the regional and local levels. In this regard, several participants discussed the importance of women's participation, including women's civil society organizations, in the drafting of plans to implement the 2030 Agenda.

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Ministerial round table on strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment

Chair's summary

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 14 March 2016, the Commission on the Status of Women held a ministerial round table on the topic "Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment" under the overall theme "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development". The participants in the round table exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the topic, emphasizing gender-responsiveness in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. The Secretary of Policies for Women's Work and Economic Autonomy of Brazil, Tatau Godinho, chaired the round table, and the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Climate Change, David Nabarro, served as moderator. Ministers and high-level officials from 25 Member States and a representative of the European Commission participated in the round table. The Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director for the Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships Bureau of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Lakshmi Puri, made closing remarks.

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Legal reforms and policy measures to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women

3. Many participants stressed the importance of ratifying and implementing the international legal framework for the protection of women's human rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and regional instruments such as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. There was consensus that strong national legal and policy frameworks were critical to ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment, and progress was reported on efforts to align national frameworks with international human rights instruments.

4. Participants highlighted the adoption of constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex and the adoption of legislation on equal opportunities and gender equality. Progress was reported on legal and policy reforms aimed at the prevention and elimination of violence against women, including female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Provisions to ensure better work/life balance through measures such as parental leave and affordable and accessible childcare were mentioned as crucial enablers of women's access to the labour market. Other areas of legal and policy reform included changes to penal codes, labour and employment, land and productive resources, health and nationality.

5. Many participants referred to the introduction of temporary special measures in national legal and policy frameworks to accelerate the achievement of equality between women and men. Increases in the numbers of women in political institutions and decision-making bodies, including parliaments, were attributed to strengthened laws on women's participation in political life. Similarly, laws and policies on quotas and targets with regard to women's participation on corporate boards and in private sector management were also highlighted.

Institutional mechanisms and other implementation measures

6. There was broad agreement that it was not sufficient to adopt laws and policies; they needed to be given full effect. Many participants referred to policies, mechanisms and other measures taken to support the implementation of laws aimed at realizing gender equality and women's human rights. National gender equality action plans and strategies were highlighted by a number of participants as important tools, together with integrating gender perspectives into sectoral policies and strategies, such as on poverty reduction. Participants also referred to the adoption of national action plans in specific areas, such as women's health and eliminating violence against women.

7. Participants underscored the role of institutions and mechanisms to promote gender equality and to monitor the implementation of legislation and policies, including through key ministries and gender equality mechanisms. Multisectoral coordination, including with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, was considered to be crucial for a more coherent and collaborative approach to promoting gender equality at all levels of government.

8. A number of participants identified collaboration between government and other actors, including civil society, in particular women's and feminist organizations, the private sector and the media, as crucial for effective implementation and monitoring of laws and policies on gender equality. Efforts to enhance the capacity-building of public officials, including law enforcement officials, were highlighted as necessary for a gender-sensitive application of all legal and policy frameworks. Investing in education for women and girls, including education on their human rights, was discussed as being important for their empowerment and for enabling them to claim those rights.

Gaps in progress and key issues for moving forward

9. Despite progress in the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls gaps and challenges remain. Many participants stressed the need for further action to remove discriminatory laws and provisions against women, including as a prerequisite for the achievement of all the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specific measures were needed for women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination. Discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes were recognized as major impediments to the achievement of gender equality and required further attention, including in the education system. Participants raised the importance of increasing the engagement of men and boys in challenging discrimination and in nurturing social norms that promoted gender equality.

10. Many participants stressed the lack of comparable high-quality data collected over time. They highlighted the importance of improving the collection and use of data disaggregated by sex to monitor progress and gaps and to inform gender-responsive policymaking, including with respect to the realization of the commitments set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Participants stressed the need for effective and better-resourced national accountability mechanisms and institutions and the critical role of women's organizations in the implementation and monitoring of national and international gender equality commitments. Participants reaffirmed their political commitment to making gender equality a priority for the national implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and called for increased investment in achieving equality between women and men.

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Ministerial round table on financing for gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Chair's summary

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 14 March 2016, the Commission on the Status of Women held a ministerial round table on financing for gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, under the overall theme "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development". The participants exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practice in relation to the topic, with an emphasis on the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

2. The President of the National Council of Women of Egypt, Maya Morsy, chaired the round table. The Secretary-General of the Ibero-American General Secretariat, Rebeca Grynspan, served as moderator. High-level officials from 22 Member States participated in the round table.

3. Participants reaffirmed that making gender equality and women's empowerment a reality required dedicated and consistent funding. Prioritized and dedicated resource allocation was an urgent imperative, as was gender mainstreaming. They agreed that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its comprehensive goals and targets, provided a historic opportunity to address gender inequality holistically and sustainably. That would require strong political commitment and increased investment from multiple and diverse sources. Many participants expressed concern that major gender equality gaps continued to exist

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and that much remained to be done to achieve the full implementation of the priorities identified in the Beijing Platform for Action.

4. Participants emphasized that the priorities identified in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development provided a road map to address the systemic barriers that hindered the full and effective implementation of gender equality commitments. They highlighted a need to link the action agreed to in the Action Agenda with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to successfully deliver on gender equality and women's empowerment objectives.

5. Participants agreed on the importance of generating domestic resources and allocating adequate public financing to achieve gender equality outcomes on a long-term basis. They gave examples of how gender-responsive fiscal policies and budgetary laws had been developed and implemented to enable Governments to increase spending in areas critical for women and girls, such as health, education, agriculture and social protection.

6. Participants stressed the importance of strong institutional mechanisms and planning frameworks to deliver results, including national gender equality and women's empowerment policies and action plans and gender mainstreaming in government planning and budgeting processes across sectors. Gender-responsive budgeting was increasingly being used to institutionalize gender equality and women's empowerment in government plans and budgets, at both the national and local levels, and to leverage resources for gender equality and women's empowerment commitments.

7. Strengthening accountability systems with regard to public budgets and spending had a role to play in increasing financing for gender equality and women's empowerment. Assessing the effectiveness of public allocations through audits and monitoring the impact of government interventions through gender analysis and assessments were critical. In that regard, participants highlighted the role of national mechanisms for gender equality and called for improved mandates, better resources and strengthened capacities to ensure their effective role in monitoring the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment commitments. Many also stressed the importance of the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data in policymaking and planning, as well as in assessing the impact of public interventions on the lives of women and girls.

8. Participants reaffirmed the importance of diverse partnerships, such as public-private partnerships, South-South cooperation and partnerships between Governments, United Nations agencies and civil society, for financing and implementing gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives. Several highlighted the responsibility of the private sector and philanthropic organizations to contribute resources to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. An example was given of the use of revenue generated from private investment in petroleum and mining to increase financing for social services for women and girls. Partnerships between financial and public institutions could play a role in eliminating discriminatory practices relating to women's access to financial services.

9. Several participants highlighted the importance of official development assistance to support countries to achieve gender equality and women's

empowerment commitments. Many expressed concern at the low level of such assistance and the little share devoted to gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Participants called for an increase in and commitment to clear contributions in that regard in official development assistance. Countries in conflict or post-conflict situations required support to help them to meet the basic needs of women and girls, to address violence against women and girls and to provide services.

Measures to accelerate financing for gender equality

10. Participants suggested that transforming the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into action and accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action required urgent action. As a universal agenda, the new framework represented Governments' renewed political will and should be used as a basis to mobilize and allocate the resources necessary to close all gender equality gaps.

11. Participants called for revenue to be mobilized and resources redistributed efficiently to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. They suggested that the capacity of government institutions at the national and local levels should be increased to ensure the development of gender-responsive plans and budgets. Gender equality mechanisms needed to be strengthened to monitor public spending, including through the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data.

12. It was emphasized that gender equality was not an expense, but an investment. All actors should work together through multi-stakeholder partnerships, increased domestic resources and targeted official development assistance and private sector engagement and accountability, to develop that investment and support the greatest emerging market — women.

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Ministerial round table on fostering gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis, and building the knowledge base

Chair's summary

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 14 March 2016, the Commission on the Status of Women held a ministerial round table on the topic "Fostering gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis, and building the knowledge base", under the overall theme "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development". The participants in the round table exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the topic, with an emphasis on gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. The Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of Germany, Elke Ferner, chaired the round table, and the National Statistician and Civil Registrar General of the Philippines, Lisa Grace Bersales, served as moderator. The meeting opened with brief introductions by the Chair and the moderator. Ministers and high-level officials from 15 Member States participated. The Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programme of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Yannick Glemarec, made closing comments.

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Forging partnerships within and among countries and with international development partners

3. All participants confirmed that gender-responsive data were one of the core elements of the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Thus, participants noted the particularly urgent need to invest in the human, financial and technical capacities of line ministries and national statistical systems to produce gender statistics. Forging partnerships between women's machineries and national statistical offices was considered key to fostering gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis and building the knowledge base. A number of participants expressed appreciation for the technical and financial support provided to national statistical systems by United Nations agencies and other development partners, and many more called for greater support for Governments in that regard.

4. Participants emphasized that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would require ownership at the country level as well as strengthened partnership and investment. Some participants also recognized the need to ensure the full and effective participation of civil society organizations in such efforts.

Innovating in data collection and presentation

5. Participants acknowledged the need to go beyond statistical conventions and develop innovative ways to measure gender equality. Participants highlighted a number of existing initiatives, including: (a) greater involvement of women's groups in data collection processes to increase ownership; (b) initiatives to involve local governments in the production and use of gender statistics; and (c) greater collaboration with the private sector to ensure access to new sources of data, including big data.

Building capacities within the national statistical system

6. Participants highlighted specific areas where support for capacity-building was needed, including: (a) producing data in specific areas such as unpaid care and domestic work, violence against women, women in poverty, women and energy, and quality of reproductive health services; (b) developing a comprehensive framework for the production of data with which to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals; (c) building capacity for data analysis, particularly capacity of small island developing States; and (d) enhancing access to modern information technologies and making data accessible to stakeholders.

Coordination to ensure the provision of gender-responsive data

7. Many participants emphasized the importance of strengthening coordination systems to support the research mechanisms already in place. Participants highlighted the need to require all authorities, particularly line ministries and national statistical offices, to work systematically towards gender equality.

8. Participants highlighted the fact that coordination mechanisms aimed at enhancing collaboration and promoting the provision of gender-responsive data included the conduct of regular meetings and seminars for data producers and users at all levels and the establishment of national groups to assess the increased requirements for data for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Making statistical information from various sources available and accessible to all users

9. A number of national initiatives undertaken by national statistical offices and line ministries to produce gender-responsive data were cited by participants, including nationwide surveys related to gender equality, and central registries of births and deaths. A number of participants also recognized the importance of tapping into new data sources, such as big data, crowdsourcing and domestic violence hotlines. In that respect, the importance of monitoring and quality control was stressed.

10. Participants also highlighted the need for greater data-sharing and use of dissemination tools, while also ensuring confidentiality and privacy, particularly regarding violence against women.

Producing user-friendly gender-responsive data and analysis

11. Participants recognized that progress had been achieved in the production and analysis of data using censuses and surveys. Participants also noted that, for gender-responsive data to be useful, the data needed to be communicated to users accurately, in a user-friendly manner and free of charge.

12. Some participants noted the need to strengthen the capacities of countries to analyse existing data and to conduct needed research on important areas such as gender pay gaps, the impacts of unpaid care and domestic work on women, engagement in the informal sector, and violence against women.

Ensuring an enabling legal, policy and financial environment

13. Participants highlighted the need to develop national strategies and mechanisms for creating an enabling environment for gender-responsive data design, collection and analysis and building the knowledge base, through: (a) legal provisions mandating national statistical systems to collect data; (b) national strategies for the development of statistics; (c) the formulation of gender-responsive statistical plans by all key government agencies; and (d) the development of comprehensive frameworks and monitoring systems to fully integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls into national planning.

14. While all participants confirmed that carrying out the appropriate disaggregation of data was essential as countries embarked on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, some acknowledged the often prohibitive cost of doing so. To address those needs and gaps, ownership, partnership and strong leadership were required within and among countries as well as in the international community.

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Interactive dialogue among ministers on building alliances for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Chair's summary

1. At its 7th meeting, on 16 March 2016, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue among ministers on building alliances for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as a component of its ministerial segment.

2. The Secretary of Policies for Women's Work and Economic Autonomy of Brazil, Tatau Godinho, chaired the dialogue, and the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, served as moderator. The dialogue opened with brief introductions by the Chair and the Moderator. Ministers and high-level officials from 21 Member States exchanged good practices, modalities, planned initiatives and other efforts to build alliances, and 10 representatives of non-governmental organizations contributed their perspectives. The dialogue concluded with closing comments from the Moderator and the Chair.

Role of alliances and partnerships

3. The participants unanimously recognized the importance of building alliances and partnerships with civil society and gave examples of practical collaboration and interaction at the national level.

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4. Participants confirmed that women and girls were drivers of change and that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls was a universal commitment. They were of the view that, while all countries had challenges to address, much work had been done that could be built on for accelerated progress. They confirmed the political and strategic importance of partnerships to promote reform and influence policies and indicated that, in their countries, civil society engagement had contributed to the adoption of gender-sensitive legislation and enhanced decision-making and democratic processes. Examples of participation by civil society organizations in monitoring and accountability mechanisms were provided.

5. Participants provided their insights on and stressed the importance of safe and enabling environments for civil society to effectively contribute to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, including the importance of the legal status of and protection for civil society organizations to engage in their work. Adequate resources for national mechanisms for gender equality, as well as for women's organizations, were needed to broaden opportunities for intervention and action. A suggestion was made to channel resources from military expenditure to support the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment.

6. Speakers highlighted the roles and contributions of civil society and other stakeholders, including women's rights and feminist groups, women human rights defenders, grass-roots organizations, trade unions, religious leaders and faith-based organizations, academia and the private sector, to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their human rights. Youth, especially young women, should be mobilized to work for gender equality, as should men and boys. The contributions of different stakeholders towards building political and social consensus for gender equality and women's empowerment and towards changing discriminatory social norms and cultural practices were stressed.

7. Speakers gave examples of consultative processes between government entities and civil society. In their view, while consultations and dialogue were not always easy, they were essential for change. Such processes ranged from informal settings to official hearings. In some countries, inclusive mechanisms consisting of representatives of Government, civil society and women's organizations and other stakeholders were in place. Interministerial coordination and the designation of gender focal points in different ministries working with civil society and other partners were mentioned, as was collaboration with bilateral donors and international organizations. The example of so-called women's rights diplomacy in international negotiations was provided.

8. The opportunity for dialogue within the Commission on the Status of Women was welcomed. Representatives from non-governmental organizations welcomed alliances and discussed a range of areas in which partnerships had made a difference in the lives of women and girls and in society as a whole.

Areas of alliances and partnerships

9. Participants highlighted opportunities for multi-stakeholder approaches towards achieving Goal 5, on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, of the Sustainable Development Goals and for a gender-responsive implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development. Implementation of the new Agenda called for the strengthening of national structures and mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment, which should include support for and expanded collaboration with women's organizations.

10. Participants highlighted laws, national action plans and development strategies, as well as gender-responsive budgeting and programming, that were in place to support gender equality and women's empowerment. Many stakeholders were working to end violence against women and girls, which remained a major challenge. Work to address the situation of children, rural women, women and girls with disabilities, migrant women, indigenous women and older women was also discussed. Women's role in national reconciliation after conflict was stressed. Efforts to enhance equal pay for equal work and work of equal value and to provide parental leave were noted, and the need for the private sector to comply with existing provisions was stressed. Collaborative work to improve nationality and family law was mentioned. Participants emphasized the need to reach all women and girls, in particular those left furthest behind and especially those subjected to multiple forms of discrimination.

11. Speakers stressed the importance of awareness-raising with regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The role of the United Nations and the Secretary-General in the promotion of gender equality was commended, and a call was made for a woman to be appointed the next Secretary-General.